

Remarks

Summary of the Office Action - Status of the Claims

Claims 1-18 were pending in the Office Action.

Claims 5, 10, 11, 15, and 16 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be otherwise allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 1-4, 6-9, 12-14, 17, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

Applicants' Reply

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 5, 10, 11, 15, and 16 would be allowable in independent form, including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In this response, Applicants amend claim 1 to incorporate all the limitations of claim 5 (and intervening claim 3), amend claim 9 to incorporate all the limitations of claim 10, amend claim 14 to incorporate all the limitations of claim 15, cancel claims 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, and 17 without prejudice, and address the Examiner's rejections. Cancellation of and amendments to claims are being made solely to expedite prosecution and do not constitute an acquiescence to the Examiner's rejections. Applicants reserve the option to further prosecute the same or similar claims in the present or a subsequent application. Upon entry of the Amendment, claims 1, 2, 4, 6-9, 11, 13, 14, 16, and 18 are pending.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-4, 6, 9, 12-14, 17 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent Number 6,850,496 to Knappe et al. ("Knappe") in view

of U.S. Patent Publication Number 2002/0123895 to Potekhin et al. ("Potekhin"). Claims 7 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Knappe in view of Potekhin and further in view of U.S. Patent Publication Number 2005/0025073 to Kwan.

While Applicants respectfully disagree with the rejections, to advance the prosecution of this application, claim 1 has been amended to include all of the limitations of claim 5 (and intervening claim 3), which the Examiner indicated would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As such, all rejections of claim 1 are now moot. Since claim 1 is allowable, claims 2, 4, and 6-8 depending therefrom are also allowable.

Similarly, to advance the prosecution of this application, claim 9 has been amended to include all of the limitations of claim 10, which the Examiner indicated would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As such, all rejections of claim 9 are now moot. Since claim 9 is allowable, claims 11 and 13 depending therefrom are also allowable.

Similarly, to advance the prosecution of this application, claim 14 has been amended to include all of the limitations of claim 15, which the Examiner indicated would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. As such, all rejections of claim 14 are now moot. Since claim 14 is allowable, claims 16 and 18 depending therefrom are also allowable.

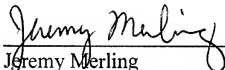
Applicants have cancelled claims 3, 5, 10, 12, 15, and 17, and as such, all rejections of these claims are moot.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks, favorable consideration and allowance of claims 1, 2, 4, 6-9, 11, 13, 14, 16, and 18 is respectfully solicited. Applicants hereby authorize the Commissioner to charge payment of any additional fees or credit any overpayment associated with this communication to Deposit Account No. 02-4377. In the event that the application is not deemed in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned in an effort to advance the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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